

THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
SUPREME COURT

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To the Legislative Leadership:

With the new legislative session about to begin, I wanted to provide you with the enclosed information about the judicial branch budget request for FY 2008-2009. My colleagues and I believe it is incumbent upon judges and court administrators to engage in an ongoing dialogue with lawmakers about our current spending, our priorities, and our funding requests. We also firmly believe it is our duty, to the citizens of New Hampshire and their representatives, to be open and transparent about budget needs. With that commitment in mind, we are submitting these documents for your review.

We are changing the way New Hampshire courts do business, and one of the most important, and fundamental, changes we have made is the way we have developed our budget request. In FY 2006-2007, for the first time, the Judicial Branch submitted an "expense maintenance budget" which made no requests for new initiatives or additional personnel. That budget kept judicial branch services at the FY 2005 level; it made no allowance for an increased caseload and it kept 25 staff positions vacant. We did however identify needs and their costs, but, mindful of the state's financial constraints, we did not ask for those additional funds. Our "expense maintenance" budget passed through both the Governor's office and the legislature without change.

This year, as we approached the FY 2008-2009 budget process, we launched an unprecedented effort that included judges, staff, lawyers and citizens to examine court system operations, identify our budget priorities and set out a strategic plan for the next six years. I know of no other time in the history of our court system that such an exhaustive, comprehensive effort has been made to improve the way we do business.

I am most proud of the fact that key elements in that discussion were generated by the New Hampshire Citizens Commission on the State Courts, which submitted its report in June 2006. All of us in the judicial branch have enormous

To the Legislative Leadership

Page 2

December 20, 2006

respect for the commission members who gave selflessly of their time, talents and expertise. You will see the influence of their recommendations throughout our FY 2008-2009 budget request. I have enclosed a copy of our six-month report to the Citizens Commission for your review.

The "Judicial Branch Strategic Plan," from which our budget request for FY 2008-2009 emerged, is also included for your review. This long-term strategic plan is our roadmap for the future of the New Hampshire court system. It sets out five goals that encompass more than 60 initiatives generated by the Citizens Commission and other study groups that took a close look at how we run the court system and the challenges we face. As you will see in the enclosed spreadsheets, only some of these initiatives require legislative financial support; we have already taken steps to initiate other ideas at no cost. Combined, they represent a new vision for justice in New Hampshire that is accessible, affordable and understandable.

Finally, I enclose a printout of power-point slides on our budget, a budget "Fact Sheet" and a table detailing budget requests and their direct connection to the five goals in our strategic plan. We have assembled all of these documents to provide each of you with a clear and fully transparent statement of our biennial budget request, which we see as the first step in a long-term plan for change. All of the enclosed documents are available on the Judicial Branch website at [www.courts.state.nh.us](http://www.courts.state.nh.us).

I know that I speak for every judge and for every court official when I say that I look forward to working with you and your colleagues during the upcoming legislative session. If I can provide additional information, please give me a call so we can find a time to meet. I would also urge you to visit any of our court locations to get to know the judges and staff from your area. They can provide you with useful, local information about the court system that I think would be very helpful as you decide on policy and priorities throughout the budget process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours very truly,

John T. Broderick, Jr.  
Chief Justice

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Enclosures